

## Common concerns about pain medicine

**Concern:** I will become “hooked” or “addicted” to pain medicine.

**Fact:** Studies show that getting “hooked” or “addicted” to pain medicine is very rare.

**Concern:** If I take too much medicine, it will stop working.

**Fact:** Medicine will not stop working, but sometimes your body will get used to the medicine. This is called tolerance. Tolerance is not usually a problem with pain treatment because the amount of medicine can be changed or other medicines can be added. Pain can be relieved, so don't deny yourself pain relief now.

**Concern:** I can only take medicine or treatments when I have severe pain.

**Fact:** You should not wait until the pain becomes severe to take your medicine. Pain is much easier to control when it is mild than when it is severe.

**Concern:** If I complain too much, I am not being a good patient.

**Fact:** Controlling your pain is an important part of your care. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have pain, if your pain is getting worse, or if you are taking pain medicine and it is not working.

*Adapted from Managing Cancer Pain, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, 1994.*

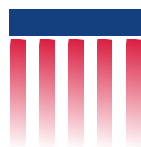
*As your health care provider, we have a major goal to identify and treat your unrelieved pain. The Veterans Health Care Administration supports the patient's right to timely and effective pain management.*

For more information please call:

Washington DC VA Medical Center:  
202-745-8247

Martinsburg VA Medical Center:  
1-800-817-3807

Va Maryland Health Care System:  
1-800-865-2441

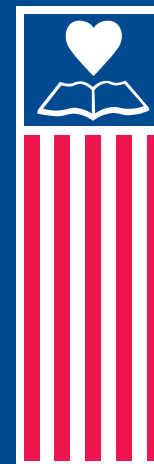


Pain Management  
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# Pain Management:

## What you Need to Know



## Veteran's Health Information

Patient  
Education  
Series



FIVE STAR SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

# What is pain?

Pain is a way your body reacts to injury or illness. Everybody reacts to pain differently. Your report about your pain is the most reliable source of information.

# What causes pain?

Pain can be caused by injury, surgery or disease. Some pain can be caused by pressure on a nerve, such as a cancer tumor or a back problem. Other pain may be caused when nerves are cut in surgery or in an accident. Sometimes there is no clear reason why people have pain. Most pain can be managed and controlled with medicine and other treatments. Sometimes all pain cannot be relieved safely for many reasons. Work with your doctor and nurse to find what pain control treatments are best for you.

# Why is pain management important?

The treatment of pain is an important part of your health care. Pain that is treated effectively and on time leads to faster recovery from surgery, disease, and injury.

# What does this Symbol Mean?

Calling pain the 5th vital sign means that every time VA staff takes your temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure, they will ask you about pain.



# What you can do:

- Tell your nurse or doctor about your pain.
- Describe your pain (none, dull, sharp, cramping, stabbing).
- Tell your nurse/doctor where the pain is located.
- Rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10.
- Tell your nurse or doctor if the medicine or treatment worked and what has helped your pain.
- Ask for pain relief when pain first begins.

# What your Doctor and Nurse will do:

- Explain to you about how the medical center staff will work with you about your pain.
- Ask you about your pain on a regular basis.
- Explain the type, amount and how to take your medicine.
- Ask you if you received the relief you expected from your medicine.
- Suggest other ways to help you be more comfortable. Relaxation, exercise, massage, stress management, use of heat or cold, are some examples.



*"Pain is a way your body reacts to injury or illness"*

# Pain Assessment Scale

